

Education and Workforce Development Cabinet Madison County first to graduate to Kentucky Work Ready Communities status

Press Release Date: Thursday, November 21, 2013

Contact Information:

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Nov. 21, 2013) – Madison County is the first community in Kentucky to graduate from Kentucky Work Ready Communities in Progress certification to the Kentucky Work Ready Communities level, according to the Kentucky Workforce Investment Board (KWIB). Twenty-two other counties are working toward the Kentucky Work Ready Communities certification as a way to strengthen and market their local workforce.

The Kentucky Work Ready Communities certification program from the Kentucky Workforce Investment Board (KWIB) and the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet assures employers that a local workforce has the talent and skills necessary to staff existing jobs and to master the innovative technologies new jobs will require.

“Pursuing the Kentucky Work Ready Communities certification is a difficult process but it is well worth the investment of local leaders’ time, energy and talent,” said Ed Holmes, chair of KWIB.

To achieve the Kentucky Work Ready Communities designation, a county must gather local support and commitment and apply for the certification. Counties have to meet criteria in six areas including high school graduation rate, National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) holders, demonstrated community commitment, educational attainment, soft-skills development and digital literacy.

Richmond Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Mendi Goble said working toward the Kentucky Work Ready Communities certification was an eye-opening experience because community leaders from business, government and education were all working together for the first time.

“You can’t put a price on getting a university, school system, city, county, business and industry together,” said Goble. “For the first time, we were all in the same room talking about the same issue which was our local workforce and how to promote and measure work ethic, critical thinking and other workplace skills.”

Currently, 23 counties have been designated as Kentucky Work Ready Communities in Progress because they are close to meeting the Kentucky Work Ready Community criteria. To achieve this level, a county must present a viable plan to meet all of the criteria within three years. The designation shows that a community is making strides and working with its business, education, workforce and economic development leaders to set and meet common goals that will give the county an economic edge.

Goble said Madison County met all but two of the goals, NCRC attainment and soft skills development, when they applied for Kentucky Work Ready Communities. As a result, they have implemented several programs to reach goals in those areas. For example, one elementary school was awarded a Leader in Me grant to improve soft skills and help students develop a work ethic early in their educational careers. The program, based on the book “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People®,” teaches students about characteristics such as leadership, responsibility and teamwork.

Crystal Gibson, chair of the Kentucky Work Ready Communities Review Panel and vice president of Public Affairs at Citigroup, said the hard work pays off for communities because the certification gives them tangible evidence that workers are skilled and that the county is committed to continuous improvement.

“As community leaders work through the program, they discover new programs they didn’t know existed, they reduce duplication of services and they build relationships between people and organizations,” Gibson said.

Goble said going through the Kentucky Work Ready Communities in Progress process and talking with local leaders has helped her be a better, more educated advocate for business in Richmond.

“What we have built and what we have learned is what is so important. As a community, we are on the same page as never before. Crossing lines has opened so many doors,” Goble said.

Applications for the certification were reviewed by a panel appointed by the KWIB. The panel recommended certification by the board for the counties that met the criteria. The panel meets four times a year to review applications, which can be submitted at any time.

For more information about the Kentucky Work Ready Communities program, go to <http://workready.ky.gov>.